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SRI LANKA

SUCCESS STORY

OTI supports Government of Sri Lanka's flood response in the East

**Rescue and supplies
helps most vulnerable
during critical emergency**



Photo Credit: Kamalanathan Jayathas

The Divisional Secretary from Vavunathivu, evacuating a new born baby in a motor boat supplied by OTI, in the midst of the worst floods to hit the district in almost one hundred years.

Following 40 days of uninterrupted heavy rains, USAID provided up to 32 motor boats to support the government transfer much needed supplies and evacuate vulnerable people from areas cut off by rising water levels.

January 2011

Following the worst floods to hit Sri Lanka in almost one hundred years, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) supported the government of Sri Lanka to evacuate more than 800 people from cut off areas as flood waters rose to dangerous levels in the eastern district of Batticaloa.

Vavunathivu division was one of the worst hit, with more than 26,000 forced to leave their homes, including five-day old Rakshiya, carried to safety and medical care in one of the boats provided by USAID, in the capable hands of Divisional Secretary Mr N. Vilvaratanam (left), on January 13, 2011.

"The water was rising very quickly," he said. "With no sign of the rain stopping, it was clear that we had to provide boats to get people to safety. USAID were able to support us immediately, providing motor boats to carry people, relief supplies and emergency medical assistance."

An estimated 379,000 people were displaced in Batticaloa, with families staying in temporary welfare centers in schools, community centres and public building on higher ground. Disaster Management statistics indicate that 90% of the district was affected, from overflowing inland reservoirs, or from the extensive lagoon. Agriculture and livelihoods are a major concern for the international community.

The east of Sri Lanka has been torn apart by decades of conflict, and with the end of military operations in the north and the defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2009, the province was starting to take advantages of peace and stability. Central Government and the Sri Lankan armed forces played a key role in evacuating at-risk families and transferring vital supplies to those in need. Supporting popular confidence in the availability of government services is a key objective of OTI in Sri Lanka.